

Onyx Informer

another voice on campus

Northeastern University

May 1990

Class of 1990: Top 5 minority students

"Northeastern University made me a more independent thinker Saida Memon," said.

Memon, 22, graduated six months earlier and is currently working with Exxon Company USA in Bayonne, NJ as a sales engineer. She was an Electrical Engineering major who entered the university on a full scholarship as a transfer student in 1987.

A native of India she said her most memorable experiences lied in her involvement in various student activities.



Baez Christopher
Khan Kim-Hue
Mah Nancy
Ogosto Olga
Roca Ana
(The above honor students were not available for the interview)

Rhondella Richardson, 22, a journalism major with a concentration in Television Broadcasting will enter the working world with great enthusiasm when she starts working as a reporter for WNEV-Channel 5 in Newark, Ma.



As she looks back to her years at Northeastern, she learned one lesson: "there is no such thing as wearing blinders." And while one needs to excel academically, one must also be "well-rounded," she said.

During her five years, she was involved various activities including the Varsity Tennis team, Network Northeastern, WRBB, and the Organization of African Unity Delegation among other organizations.

For graduating senior Nishit "Tinu" Oza of India, leaving Northeastern with honors means "a big smile on my parents face," he said.

A transfer student who entered the Northeastern in 1986 as an Electrical Engineering major, Oza said he studied when it was necessary and had a good time.

As the 23 year-old senior leaves NU with the intention of pursuing a master's degree in Business Administration, he hopes his "work and social life will peacefully coexist with each other."



Janai Malary, 23, entered Northeastern in 1985 on a scholarship. As she leaves the University in June, the honor student said her academic record will tell people that she did the best for herself.

As a Business and Marketing major, her classes were very big, yet she did not shy away. For she managed to stand up and be noticed.

As far as the cooperative education is concerned, "It put me in a better frame -- I have a clear direction," the Haiti native said.

She will use her co-op experience to start a new magazine geared toward women of color next fall.

However, she missed out on student activities. Why? A part-time job, she answered.

For the 22 year-old **Myra Sayar**, a high Great Point Average (GPA) does not measure intelligence. "It usually tells how well one takes tests," she said.

Even though the Industrial Engineering student has been on the dean's list for five years, that factor only doesn't determine who she is. "I want people to know me for who I am, not what I got on a transcript."

If there is one thing she learned from Northeastern: "Don't judge a book by its cover." Regardless of her seemingly pleasant experience at NU, she said the university's cooperative program needs more structure and more aggressive minority recruiting and placement.



(Photos provided by students)

Africa: 'Priorities have been confused' speaker says

Danielle Delince
Onyx Staff

"In Africa poverty is measured by the presence of misery. If there is no misery, no sadness in the heart, there is no poverty," Fredrick Kwoba said. Kwoba, executive director of Third World Education Outreach, Inc. spoke last week at the African American Institute to bring awareness on the problems facing the African continent today.

Is Africa poor? "Well, it depends on whom you asked," he said. But the Westerner's definition of poverty is often limited to the lack of material goods whereas in the African culture asking such question can be an insult, he said.

The traditional African definition of poverty has been overrun by the Westerners, he said. However, it is difficult to view the concept the traditional way while adopting the European perception. "What we [Africans] are saying is let us accept the Western definition but let us expel the non-African aspects, and create that wealth ourselves," the Kenyan native said.

However the deteriorating conditions of Africa must be dealt with in an African context and "we think that we have to capture our rights and find a common ground," he said.

According to Kwoba, a native of Kenya, Africa was a peaceful continent before the arrival of white coloniz-

ers at the turn of the 20th century. Of all the "civilization" the white man brought to Africa, education was the least emphasized because it is easier to oppress people when they are uneducated, he pointed out.

The colonizers, whether they came from Great Britain, France, Belgium, Spain or Portugal, had the common goal to make greater profits and create infrastructure which were not suitable to Africa's primary needs, Kwoba said.

The projects created by the European powers failed because the natives were never involved in their makings. "Africans were not deciding on what they were getting," he said. One

example of such policy involved the high-tech Tanzania airport. After the builders left, the airport broke down because the Tanzanians were not trained in the construction and therefore could not take over. This problem is endemic throughout Africa in different forms, the Kenyan said.

In the 1950s, when African leaders began to realize the failure of the colonizer's investments, they united in blocks and demanded independence. But because the natives lack the resources to develop on their own, they went back to the old model of dependency. "The people [Africans] have the ideas, but don't have the money," he said.

Kwoba went on to say that the various international agencies such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank have not been effective because they don't understand Africa's culture. Other organizations have failed as well. World Vision, Oxfam, and many other religious groups have not succeeded because they tend to "exaggerate and blow the situation [famine or drought] out of proportion to get funding," Kwoba said.

However, the organizations that seem to bring some hope to solving the continent's ills are the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO).

letters

To the Editor:

Various races are clearly indicated on Northeastern's financial aid form, including American Indian, Black, Asian, Hispanic and White, which more accurately should be called Caucasian. "Black vs. White: Speaking Out, March 1990 takes issues with the way the question is phrased, which allows Caucasians claim to Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian sub-continent as home. The article states that an insidious attempt is made to "steal the history of North Africa from the Black African people, the true author of civilization."

The question was supposed to compile data on minority enrollment, so the government can make sure that the school complies with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. An illogical argument states that since Black people were the majority of the population in these areas in the past, it is racism and cultural theft to say Caucasians live there today. Northern Africans, meaning Egyptians, Libyans, Moroccans, etc. are today largely white and to say otherwise on the FAF form would constitute a form of fraud? Surely the author does not want to skew and distort the findings merely because of pride.

It is not racism, nor is it an attempt to steal the Black man's history to state the question the way it is. The author promotes myths about European civilization in order to support his case. Everybody knows the European knew that the world was round, as the article so vehemently denies. The Greeks disproved this theory and they are definitely not Black Africans, at least not in any history book I have read.

The names of some Arab countries are related to Swahili but I find it totally illogical to then claim that since these countries had Black settlers, inhabitants of those countries today must be counted as Blacks. Just for the record, most Arabs are not Black. In fact, Arabs and Hebrews are Semites. There are tens of thousands of Black Semites, but despite pride in the past and the racial makeup of the population then, today they are the minority in those countries.

Quite simply the argument containing many correct historical facts and interpretations, does not support you conspiratorial claims that "the usurpation

of knowledge has been a major preoccupation of the European since his realization that he is not the author of civilization and takes pity on his dilemma." It is just not true that all white people are jealous of African civilization, or that "North Africa was the envy of all who knew its grandeur," nor is it true that these are the reasons that Northeastern has a question which lets white people refer to their origin as being from North Africa.

White America is largely ignorant of the extent of the contributions and achievements of Black civilization, both today and in the past. It would be a good thing if African civilization was looked upon with a type of envy or jealousy. The real problem is not that white people knew everything about the Africans, and conspired to hide it. Rather, in the past and even today, not enough people know African history at all. Maybe a little envy would stir up some academic interest.

Spending time educating others would promote better understanding rather than slandering Caucasians. This path will not glorify Black people's triumphs, it will simply add to the barriers that already divide us.

Robert D. Kaiser
Junior
Physics

Although racial classification is used and accepted in the U.S. and in most, if not all, American institutions it was European colonial powers which referred to themselves as "white." It was Europeans who also came up with the way of defining race with such terms as Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid. The question is why some one or some group would classify the whole of humanity in terms of racial classification if it was not their intent to single out certain physiological differences to use them to dehumanize or rationalize the oppression of one people over another. It was also Europeans who set up racial classification within their own group by defining the Normans and Saxons as different races. This sickness of racial classification has plagued Europeans since the time they descended from the Caucasus mountains, a region in Europe from which the term Caucasian originated.

Napoleon Bonaparte left evidence that Cannons were used in an attempt to shoot the noses and lips off of many of the Ancient Egyptian statues. Understand that a lie told long enough,

loud enough and often enough will become an accepted falsehood perceived as truth. Alexander the "Great" of Macedonia went so far as to burn and plunder the libraries of Egypt and then incorporate that knowledge into Greek society.

According to the laws of miscegenation (race-mixing) established within the United States Pre-Civil Rights Era, the definition of a black person was anyone having one eighth "black" blood in them by way of parentage or ancestry. Black people quite naturally range in a spectrum of hues from "Blue" Black to "High" yellow. People born of mixed parentage are by definition still officially considered members of the race of the parent with the dominant gene, this is confirmed by the use of the terms mulatto, quadroon and octoroon. The term dominant is used in the context of dominant and recessive traits as defined by geneticists, not in the context of racial superiority of inferiority.

In closing my article I would like to offer these readings from which my information was obtained:

1. Stolen Legacy by George James
2. Sex and Race Vol. I, II, III by J.A. Rogers
3. Africa's Gift to Civilization by J.A. Rogers
4. Iceman Inheritance by Michael Brady
5. The Science of Healing by As-Sayyid Al Imaam Isa Al-Haadi Al-Mahdi

Richard Ruben Harris, class of '89, Industrial Engineering

I want to make it clear that I disagree with the definition of white on the financial aid form, which puts everybody from India to North Africa into one category. The same definition is used on visa applications in U.S. Embassies all around the world. This is the official way to define race in the United States.

The author in "Black vs. White: Northern Africa; who are true descendants?" Speaking Out, March 1990 is not blaming Northeastern or the U.S. government for the inappropriate definition. It was stated that the European wants "to steal the history of North Africa from Black African people, the true authors of civilization." I don't understand how this piece of paper used for official purposes can steal history, but aside from that I disagree with the statement of somebody being the true author of civilization.

The author said that

North Africa is "the crux of civilization from whence all others spread." Black civilization was "advanced at a time when in Europe they were still in dispute as to whether the world was round"; that "North Africa was the envy of all who knew its grandeur". The writer claimed that the Arabic language is "the mother tongue," having "many... dialects, such as Hebrew and Swahili." The conclusion of the whole letter is: "we must realize that the usurpation of knowledge has been a major preoccupation of the European since his realization that he is not the author of civilization and takes pity on his dilemma, as we destroy his lies."

We have to make a difference between humanity and civilization. It is true that humankind was born somewhere in the middle of Africa, and has spread from there all over the world, killing its less developed ancestors. It was long after this that the first civilizations appeared at big rivers in what is now India, China, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. Civilizations were built up and were destroyed or incorporated by others, most of their history forgotten forever. Because humanity came from Central Africa, any part of Africa was the author of civilizations outside of Africa. The true authors were the people who worked hard to build up their houses and cities, dared to sail unknown seas, and died for values long forgotten.

North Africa had Egyptian civilization operating for thousands of years, until it was incorporated into the Roman Empire. When the Romans or the Greeks arrived they didn't go home to the father of civilization. During these days people didn't care about the color of their skin.

I would rather say North

Africans are of varying descents. The Nubians lived south of Egypt, and were taken as slaves, they mixed with the Egyptian population, which was obviously whiter - we just have to take a look at pictures in the pyramids and palaces showing people of every kind.

It is inaccurate to say that "Northern African civilization was advanced at a time when in Europe they were still in a dispute as to whether the world was round." Scientists were disputing this all over the world for thousands of years. In the 17th century the dispute was still alive in Europe, and let me not talk about where Egyptian or Arabic might was at that time. Actually when the crusaders met Arabic science and culture, the great advancements were already in libraries for centuries.

The conclusion of the article is simply untrue and unfortunately offending. The article states that the European was usurping knowledge to conceal that he is not the author of civilization. It is not possible to find a sane European scientist or writer of our century who believed and said that Europe is the author of civilization. I don't like anybody stating that his/her nation, homeland or continent is the author of the civilization. Hitler, Stalin, and even Causescu were saying the same, and it's not a good idea to repeat fatal mistakes of humankind. If you are the author, you are the father, others are children, meaning you are superior to them. And you are again back at the old lie of superiority, the one that you wanted to fight against.

Gabor Finacz
Middler
Finance

Editor Beverley Lewis
News Editor Danielle Delince
Cartoonist Wendell Bonhomme
Advertising James Pryor
Photography Mark Blader
Annisá Andrews
Staff Dell Hamilton

Please address letters to:

Onyx Informer
Northeastern University
Room 442 Ell Center
Boston, MA 02115
(617) 437-2250

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speaking out

Essay contest winner:

When you can't walk the streets in Roxbury

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., Sigma Chapter, sponsored a high school writing competition to recognize students in the Boston area who display dynamic writing ability. The students were given topics centered around the Black community.

The students read their essays May 21 at the African-American Institute. Each participant will receive a certificate for entering the competition. The winners received cash prizes which will go towards their college education.

The participants were Arthur Grupee (1st place), Ruthie Santos (2nd place), Benjamin Ortizlaza (3rd place), Natasha Schneeborg, Derek Green, Thomas Leslie, Jequeta Bostick, Irma Gomes, Anthony Robinson.

I am a Black man, probably the blackest of them all. Slavery is over and I am an endangered species. My brothers are being killed at an alarming rate for senseless crimes.

Black is a civilization, one that is very mysterious. Black people started civilization near the Nile River in Egypt, we built the very first government in the world. Under this government, people of all religions and sexes, came together. These mysterious people went on to even build the pyramid. Something even today's mathematicians can't figure out.

Africa became the hope of the future. People from all over the world came to dream of a Black people's home. The Motherland. Even philosophers like Socrates visited Egypt to understand how people from varied descents could come together under one leadership.

As a Black man, I walk the streets wearing Adidas, Nikes and Reeboks.

"Hey, what up Nigger?" are the words from the

Black man's mouth.

He doesn't want to be associated with Africa. He wears goose jackets, Adidas and American made blue jeans. Because for a millennium he has told his home is nothing but monkeys. He warches Tarzan. The only thing he sees is ignorant dumb Africans.

This is what happens to protagonists. We were sold from our clansmen and sisters to a place that we have never heard. Now we are deprived of our identity, lost in Christopher Columbus' and George Washington's America.

"All men are created equal" are words from our new Constitution.

Now as we move up into a new decade of changes in Eastern Europe, and the release of my brother Nelson Mandela, and the restructuring of Apartheid what will happen to me in Roxbury?

As I walk the streets, faces turn to see. I always wonder who are they looking at. I think it is because I am Black. I keep walking. The next thing I notice is a man dressed in a navy blue suit, black shoes, with a blackjack on his belt.

"Hey, get up against the car," he yells.

What have I done now? Nothing. The Black man is blamed for everything in society: the drug dealer, the rapist, the car thief.

I am a victim of "All men are created equal." The macho masculinity that we learned in this country has made me an oppressor of myself and my own kind.

The powers-that-be determine what I should be in life. My academic schools are turned into technical schools like my brothers in Soweto.

We built America with our blood, sweat and tears. I am nothing in the eyes of you so-called northern liberals. In the South racism is overt, whereas in the North it is covert. Roxbury is supposedly my home, but I can't even walk the streets.

The proud African American is the conscious one.

Arthur Grupee is a senior at Madison Park High School.

Michael Plummer:

Is urban America on the decline?

I am outraged at the whole urban situation. As Black people, we employ various tricks of self-deception to deny to ourselves of what is going on. If we fully recognized and acted upon the disintegrating socio-economic situation, with its overtones of racism and class suppression, we would eventually have to drop all vestiges of our personal lives and become fully engaged in 'the struggle' in the manner of many of our people during the '60s.

We are actually worse off now than we were during the '60s, when I was a college student. While individual success stories can be cited, the socio-political alienation, and economic isolation from the mainstream culture of those known as 'the Black underclass' is profoundly discouraging. Half of all prisoners in the United States, whether male or female, juvenile or adult, are Black.

Boston shows the same demographic patterns of major cities across the country whereas whites and affluent Blacks are moving out of the center city. The federal government has cut funds for human services, housing and education programs - a policy that strikes hard.

Boston's racist attitudes:

The unique thing about Boston is the particular brand of extremely aggressive, yet devious institutionalized, entrenched racism. There is a simmering resentment of Black people on the part of far too many Bostonians - expressed in attitude, demeanor and actions.

Aside from simple prejudice, we are hurt by several other realities in this city. We are a significantly smaller percentage of the total population than in most major cities in the eastern half of the country. Black Boston has moved relatively slowly and ineffectively, compared to other cities, in gaining real political and economic power.

Many of the advances of the Civil Rights Era have been rolled back by Reagan appointees in the judicial system - from the Supreme Court on down through federal judges, courts of appeals and so forth. Legal interpretations of the Constitution and federal and state laws have become increasingly conservative and less favorable to civil rights and affirmative action.

Boston's Black leadership through the years has been weak and ineffective because too often it has allowed itself to be undercut, divided or distracted. It does not get the respect it needs to be effective - either from whites or from its constituents because of its inability to produce statesmen/women with broad national vision as opposed to provincial leaders who become ried to provincial concerns. In this respect it is not far behind the white leadership, as paralysis in the state legislature takes hold while common people suffer and the state budget deficit grows toward one billion dollars.

The leadership vacuum is producing widespread disillusionment in both the Black and the white communities, and the economic breakdown which is affecting everybody is turning into hardened cynicism about both government and the anointed leadership.

In the white community, it is expressed in a tax revolt of unprecedented depth and breadth. Among Blacks, we see frenzied self-destructiveness by a mind-boggling array of methods assisted, by those who are always ready to lend a hand to Black self-destructiveness, uncontrollable violence among the young, and private and dangerous sense of not having full citizenship rights.

Northeastern's leadership role:

I have found that both the leadership at

"President Curry has been firm in his progressive statements regarding Black concerns..."

-Michael Plummer

Northeastern, the quintessential urban university, is actually superior to the city as a whole. Not to say that NU is perfect, but in my opinion there is an excellent climate for progress and harmony due to the quality of leadership here. President Curry has been firm in his progressive statements regarding Black concerns, setting a positive tone and framework from the top. We have seasoned civil rights veterans who continue to work hard for all students here at Northeastern. I have met numerous outstanding Black faculty, administrators and even support and technical personnel. I am impressed at the quality, even though we need more. There are also numerous outstanding whites I have met at all levels to - quality professionals who are progressive in their thinking.

But to return to cases, yes, I am outraged that we have gone so far beyond the point where ordinary complaining about the state and condition of urban America and Boston in particular is appropriate. Outraged that those to whom we have entrusted the operation and administration of the state and city have failed us. Outraged because greed, mismanagement of resources and mis-ordering of priorities have carried the day at local, state and federal levels, leaving Blacks, other 'minorities' and poor whites to reap the whirlwind.

All around the world, it seems, everyone in positions of power and wealth is engaged in an orgy of greed, everyone wants a little more, and everyone who can wants to squeeze the little man to get it. This is what the current spread rioting in England, which will unseat Margaret Thatcher, is about a poll tax on an already economically beaten and beleaguered population. If there is to be a new politics, perhaps it is represented by the great South African leader, Nelson Mandela. He is free and he continues to make all the right moves.

Everyone is talking about the problems of the city now. You pop on a talk show or the news, and its wall-to-wall experts, 'leaders' and 'authorities,' all chattering away and interrupting each other about what needs to be done and who is at fault. Everybody is blaming or claiming that the problem is that their little corner of the world has not been given enough money to carry out its 'mandate.' The police are blaming the courts for not locking up people they arrest. Judges are saying if the police cannot handle violence in the city they should bring in the national guard. Local government says the state is not giving it enough money. Some authorities think the answer is to build more prisons, but nobody wants it near them, and nobody wants to pay.

What it comes down to is that everybody is using the old paradigms, repeating the old, outdated 'solutions' mouthing the same tired thought processes, when what is needed is a new paradigm - a new way of thinking, of problem-solving.

You look at what is going on around you right now, you have to stop and wonder. Is this a normal state of affairs? This is insanity. This is craziness. This is certifiable madness. Our urban infrastructure has collapsed.

Michael Plummer is a visiting lecturer in Northeastern's Sociology Department.

Write for the *ONYX*
be noticed!
437-2250

NUROW in Haiti



Students riding on a local taxi or "tap-tap" in the capital city Port-au-Prince.



Felix Lucien and Marina Karides on outing in the countryside.

Three Haitian teenagers at an orphanage in Carrefour, a suburb of Port-au-Prince.

Photo courtesy
(NUROW)



Lynn Dries and Marian McInnis on an outing in Cap-Haitien, north of the country.



As they explored another culture, they learned about themselves



NUROW members dining at a restaurant in Port-au-Prince. From left Theresa Reed, Tracy Cooper, a guide, Felix Lucien and Sheryl Abbot, advisor to the group.

*There is a
certain quality
of life ... each
day is a day
of survival.*

Marina Karides
NUROW member